

MINUTES
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEETING
APRIL 3, 2023
CASE #23-11
“A” to “B-2” W/ CUP

HOLD a public hearing and consider a request submitted by Westwood Professional Services, on behalf of McClean Commercial, LTD (**Case #Z23-11**) to rezone approximately 21.16 acres out of the William H. Cole Survey, Abstract No. 200, from “A” (Agricultural District) to “B-2” (Local Retail District) with a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to allow a battery storage site as a permitted use. This property is locally addressed as 8390 Featherline Road, Killeen, Texas.

Ms. Larsen presented the staff report for this item. She stated that, if approved, the applicant intends to develop a battery storage site on the property. The intent of the proposed battery storage facility is to establish better power reliability for customers during times of power instability by preventing brown and blackout events and providing power stability to the grid.

Ms. Larsen stated that the request is consistent with the Big Ideas of the 2022 Comprehensive Plan. The battery storage system will support Oncor’s ability to meet electricity demand, while also stabilizing the overall grid via energy regulation. She also stated that the applicant intends to provide a landscaped screening buffer along the north and west boundary of the proposed development. Staff recommends approval of the applicant’s CUP request.

Mr. Dan Ditto was present to represent the request.

Chairman Minor asked if they are asking for a tax abatement. Mr. Ditto said they are early in the development, but they believe that will be a conversation for a later date.

Commissioner Ploeckelmann asked if there will be any Federal subsidies for this project. Mr. Ditto stated that he did not have that information. He also stated that the request at this time is just to rezone the property.

Commissioner Ploeckelmann asked what the safety record for these battery storage sites is. Mr. Ditto stated that the battery storage containers are highly regulated. If a fire occurs, the units should remain shut, and the fire will burn itself out.

Commissioner Ploeckelmann asked if any specialized equipment that our Fire Department may not currently have would be necessary to put out such a fire. Mr. Ditto stated that no specialized equipment would be necessary because the fire would be able to burn out on its own if containers remained shut.

Commissioner Jones asked the applicant to clarify the amount of energy the battery units would be able to supply. Mr. Ditto stated that the facility would be able to provide electricity to 100,000 customers for two hours. He further clarified that the battery site is not meant to supply power to all residences in Killeen at any one time.

Commissioner O'Brien asked if they intend to build more than one of these battery storage sites in the same area. Mr. Ditto stated that there is not a plan to build another battery storage site in Killeen.

Vice Chair Gukeisen stated that the battery storage site is meant to support the regional grid, so if there is a strain on the grid in a nearby city, the power would be directed to support it.

Commissioner Wilson asked who would get priority in case of a strain on the grid. Mr. Ditto stated that the system would give support instantaneously to wherever the nearest strain is located.

Chairman Minor asked if Black Mountain Energy Storage would be willing to provide training to the Fire Department, if needed. Mr. Ditto said that has been considered, and they are open to discussing the training needs of the Fire Department.

Chairman Minor opened the public hearing at 6:02 p.m.

Ms. Michele Mazzaferro stated that she is in support of the request but had questions for the applicant about whether a similar project has been done at other communities, how it would affect the property value of the surrounding residences, and if it is safe to have battery storage sites so close to residential neighborhoods.

Mr. Ditto stated that a substation is already located on the property, so the proposed facility should not affect property values. He also stated that the safety of the surrounding residences would not be affected.

With no one else wishing to speak, the public hearing was closed at 6:06 p.m.

Commissioner Jones moved to recommend disapproval of the applicant's request. The motion died for lack of a second.

Commissioner Ploeckelmann moved to approve the request as presented. Commissioner Wilson seconded.

Vice Chair Gukeisen moved to amend the motion to include a condition that the applicant provide training to the Fire Department, as needed. Commissioner Jones seconded, and the amendment passed by a vote of 7 to 0.

Commissioner Jones asked if the training would be one-time, or if the training would be required on an ongoing basis.

Vice Chair Gukeisen withdrew his motion to amend the recommendation to include training.

Vice Chair Gukeisen moved to amend the motion to include training in accordance with the needs of the Killeen Fire Department. Commissioner Jones seconded, and the motion to amend passed by a vote 7 to 0.

The motion to approve the applicant's request with the condition that the applicant provide training in accordance with the needs of the Killeen Fire Department passed by a vote 6 to 1 with Commissioner Jones in opposition.

Commissioner Jones stated that he believes the proposed development is a waste of money because it does not provide enough electricity to accommodate Killeen.